

Appl. No. 10/694,930
Amdt. dated April 6, 2005
Reply to Office Action of February 25, 2005

REMARKS

In response to the aforementioned Office Communication and In order to avoid changes to the application which might necessitate a further search, applicant has cancelled claims 17 and 18 from the application and amended independent claims 1, 7, 14, 15, and 16 in a manner that should not require further searching by the Examiner.

It is felt beneficial to first of all clarify features of the present invention which have been in the claims previously considered by the Examiner, but which are not features that are felt to be shown or suggested by the cited art. More particularly, in the covering or panel claimed in the present application, it will be appreciated the panel can consist of first and second parallel sheets of fabric material or one sheet of fabric material and at least two strings displaced from the sheet of fabric material. In either instance a plurality of vanes interconnect either the sheets of fabric material or the sheet of fabric material with the strings. The vanes are made of a flexible material having a top face and a bottom face referred to in the claims as first and second sides and further including longitudinally extending edges. The vanes are connected to the sheets of fabric material, or to the strings as the case may be, on opposite sides or faces of the vanes adjacent to the longitudinally extending edges of the vanes. By connecting the vanes to the sheets of fabric material or the strings in this manner, and with the vanes made of a flexible material, the vanes will assume a S-shaped cross-sectional configuration when the panel is open with the sheets of material, or a sheet and strings as the case may be, being maximally spaced with the vanes extending substantially perpendicular to the sheets or strings. In this configuration, the vanes bias the covering or panel toward its closed position wherein the sheets (or the sheet and strings) are

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closely adjacent to each other and the vanes are parallel therewith. It should further be noted in some embodiments of the invention, the vanes along there longitudinally extending edges have a different physical characteristic than along the central portion between the edges with such an arrangement being supported in the specification on page 25, lines 1-7 and in paragraph [0114]. The above features of the present invention are set forth in independent claims 1, 7, 14, 15, and, 16 and the claims were felt to be allowable as previously submitted. The claims are further felt to be allowable due to the amendments made herein which are felt to only more clearly distinguish the claimed invention from the prior art.

The primary references relied upon by the Examiner in the rejection of the claims are the British Patent number 1,594,842 and the Patent to Croxen number 3,032,099. The Croxen Patent is really only of material interest in that it discloses vanes or slats of a Venetian blind which are generally S-shaped in a cross-sectional configuration. It is important to note that the Croxen slats or vanes are made of a rigid material and are not flexible as in the present invention and are not connected to sheets, or sheets and strings as the case may be, on opposite faces or sides of the vanes. Rather, the vanes are merely supported on a conventional tape ladder.

The British Patent is of interest in disclosing a blind that is shown in a plurality of embodiments which might by way of example have a sheet of material and a pair of spaced strings with vanes interconnecting the sheet of material with the space strings. The sheet of material is secured to one face of the vanes adjacent to one longitudinal edge thereof, but the strings are connected to the vanes at space locations from the opposite longitudinal edge by passing the strings, or tapes as they are referred to in the

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British specification, through holes in the vanes and while it is not clear from the specification, the tapes must be secured to the vanes in the holes through which they pass. As with the Croxen Patent, the British specification does not disclose the concept of attaching one side or face of a vane to one sheet and the opposite side or face of the vane to an opposite sheet or strings. Rather, in the British Patent, the vanes are connected to the strings in holes through the vanes rather than to one face or side of the vane. In the embodiment of the British Patent wherein two sheets of material are utilized, the sheets are likewise not secured to opposite faces or sides of the vanes.

As will be appreciated from the above, there are features in the present invention which are patentably distinct from the cited art and the independent claims in the application are felt to incorporate one or more of these features.

Looking first at independent claim 1 upon which claims 2, 3 and 6 are dependent, it will be appreciated it is directed to a panel for use in a covering for an architectural opening wherein the panel has a sheet of fabric and at least two strings displaced from one another and positioned in a parallel plane with the sheet. Further there are a plurality of parallel and flexible fabric vanes having first and second sides as well as first and second longitudinally extending edges. The first side of at least some of the vanes is attached to the sheet of fabric adjacent to the first edge of the vane and the second side of at least some of the vanes is attached to the strings adjacent the second longitudinally extending edge and wherein at least some of the vanes can assume an S-shaped configuration. As mentioned previously, the prior art does not disclose flexible vanes that can assume an S-shaped configuration, nor does the prior art disclose vanes that are connected on one face or side to one sheet of material and on the opposite

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face or side to strings. Accordingly, it is felt claim 1 was allowable as previously presented, but is felt to be even more clearly allowable in its newly amended form in that the vanes are now specifically alleged to be flexible so as to more clearly distinguish the panel from, for example, the Croxen reference which utilizes rigid vanes.

Independent claim 7 is directed to a covering for an architectural opening that includes a sheet of fabric material and at least two parallel strings spaced from one another and in a plane spaced from the parallel sheet. Again there are a plurality of parallel longitudinally extending fabric vanes having first and second sides and wherein at least some of the vanes have first and second longitudinally extending edges. The first side of said at least some of said vanes is connected to said fabric sheet adjacent to a first edge of the vane and the second side of said at least some of the vanes is connected to the strings adjacent to the second edge. The vanes are also claimed as being capable of assuming an S-shaped configuration. As mentioned previously, the prior art does not disclose vanes which can assume an S-shaped configuration and are connected on one face or side to a sheet of fabric adjacent an edge thereof and on the opposite face or side adjacent an opposite edge to the strings. Accordingly, claim 7 is also felt to be allowable as well as claims 8, 9, 12, and 13 which are dependent thereon.

Independent claim 14 is directed to a light controlling covering having first and second sheets of material of different textures and a plurality of elongated, flexible strips of materials cured to and extending between the first and second sheets of material with the covering being movable between an open position wherein the sheets are maximally spaced and a closed position wherein the sheets are adjacent to each other and with the strips of material being capable of assuming an S-shape configuration in

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the open position of the covering. Further, the strips are claimed as biasing the covering toward the closed position of the covering.

It should be appreciated independent claim 14 provides the strips of material or vanes for the covering are flexible and capable of assuming an S-shaped configuration. As mentioned previously, the Croxen reference, while having slats that may be S-shaped in cross-section are not flexible. The British Patent shows vanes that might be interpreted as being S-shaped in configuration as viewed in Fig. 1 (b) when the covering is closed, but the vanes or slats are certainly not S-shaped in configuration when the covering is open as in Fig. 1 (a). Accordingly, claim 14 is felt to be patentably distinct from the prior art.

Fig. 15 is directed to a light controlling covering having first and second sheets of material of different textures and a plurality of elongated flexible strips secured to and extending between the sheets of material. At least some of the strips assume an S-shaped configuration when disposed substantially perpendicularly to the sheets of material and further the strips of flexible material have edge portions which have different physical characteristics than a central portion. Clearly the prior art does not disclose vanes or strips of material wherein the edges have different physical characteristics than central portions thereof as described in more detail in the present application on page 25, lines 1 through 7, and further does not disclose, as discussed previously, flexible vanes that are capable of assuming an S-shaped configuration when disposed substantially perpendicularly to the sheets of material as when the covering is in an open position. Accordingly, claim 15 is thought to be patentably distinct from the prior art.

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Independent claim 16 is directed to a covering having first and second sheets of material of different textures and a plurality of parallel elongated flexible, strips of materials secured to and extending between the sheets of material with at least some of the strips being capable of assuming an S-shaped configuration when disposed substantially perpendicularly to said sheets of material. The strips of material have first and second faces or sides with one side being secured to one sheet of material and the other side to the second sheet of material. Again, the prior art does not disclose vanes which are capable of assuming an S-shaped configuration when disposed perpendicularly to the sheets of material, or in other words, when the covering is in an open position, nor does the prior art disclose a covering when the strips of material are connected to the sheets on opposite faces or sides of the strips of material.

Accordingly, claim 16 is also thought to be patentably distinct from the prior art.

Having canceled claims 17 and 18 and amended claims 1, 7, and 14 through 16 so they are more clearly patentably distinct from the prior art, it is felt the application is in condition for allowance and such action is courtesy requested.

Should the Examiner have any questions or concerns regarding the above which would preclude an allowance of the application, it would be appreciated if he would contact attorney for applicant at the below listed number.

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Respectfully submitted,



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GMP/dtc

cc: HDBV and HDI (HM-101.19-353)
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